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THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN®

THIS JURY FINDS HIM...
GUILTY!

KAVANAGH ◆ ABNETT ◆ CALAFIORE ◆ P.L. PALMIOTTI

Jennifer Le + Mark McKenna

SQUADRON SUPREME

STAN LEE presents IRON MAN

ONE TWIST IS ALL IT TAKES.

OF FATE. OF FORTUNE. OF A FRAGILE NECK.

KRAK!

A HISTORIC CHAPTER IN AVENGERS HISTORY!

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BUT ANTHONY STARK IS NO MONSTER. NO COLD-BLOODED KILLER.

THERE'S KINDNESS IN HIS APPARENT CRUELTY. HE'S NOT MURDERING. HE'S DOING WHAT HE DOES BEST.

REPAIRING. MENDING. FIXING. BUILDING.

MARIANNE RODGERS WAS JUST REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS* WHEN STARK RETURNED TO HIS ARCTIC BUNKER TO FIND MASQUE GONE AND MACHINESMITH LIFELESS.

...NOW SMASHED AND BROKEN AT THE HANDS OF THE ESCAPEE MASQUE.*

STARK SAID NOTHING. HE LIFTED THE SHATTERED ROBOT TO THE BENCH AND BEGAN THE REPAIRS.

MARIANNE THINKS: "IT'S ONLY A MACHINE. WHY DO I FEEL GUILTY? WHY DOESN'T ANTHONY SAY SOMETHING?" SHE REACHES OUT WITH HER TELEPATHY...

...AND FEELS THE GENUINE CONCERN IN STARK'S HEART.

THE ROBOT MACHINE-SMITH, DUTIFUL ASSISTANT, STEADFAST COMPANION, WHO CALLED HIM "CHIEF" IN AN EASY, HUMAN WAY...

*LAST ISSUE. --NEL

SHE FEELS THE PAIN.

IT IS SO DEEP, IT ASTONISHES HER. IT IS AS IF STARK HAS LOST HIS ONE, REMAINING FRIEND.

UNBIDDEN, TEARS THAT STARK WON'T ALLOW HIMSELF TO CRY WELL UP IN MARIANNE'S EYES.

THE CHILL OF STARK'S LONELINESS SWEEPS OVER HER AND SHE WONDERS "WHEN DID THAT FAMOUS GOLDEN ARMOR, BUILT TO KEEP THE WORLD AT BAY..."

"...BECOME SO COLD AND AIRTIGHT A PRISON FOR THE MAN INSIDE?"

THE VAN DYNE ESTATE, SOUTHAMPTON, LONG ISLAND.

CURRENTLY, THE MAKESHIFT HEADQUARTERS OF EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHAT WILL PAIN THEM MORE...

...THE PROPERTY DAMAGE CAUSED BY A RUNNING BATTLE WITH IRON MAN, OR THE CRASHED MILITARY TRANSPORT PLANE ON THE BACK LAWN.

BE STILL, HAWKEYE! I CANNOT BIND YOUR WOUND IF YOU KEEP MOVING...

AH, LET IT BE, HERCULES. I'M BUSTIN' TO HEAR MORE OF THIS LADY'S FAIRY STORIES!

I HAVEN'T COME THIS FAR TO BE LAUGHED AT BY THE LIKES OF YOU, BOWMAN.

I CLAWED MY WAY OUT OF STARK'S BUNKER, MADE IT TO A NORWEGIAN LISTENING POST ON FOOT, AND SHANGHAIED THE TRANSPORT PLANE TO GET HERE AND WARN YOU.

MARIANNE RODGERS IS STILL HIS PRISONER. I FEAR FOR HER SAFETY. STARK IS... NOT THE MAN WE KNEW.

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW, MASQUE.

I TAKE IT THIS NEW DECOR IS HIS HANDIWORK?

*LAST ISSUE AND AVENGERS #393. --NEL

IRON MAN'S TRUE AGENDA WAS ACCIDENTALLY REVEALED TO US BY AN IMAGE-INDUCER SCAN OF THE CHILD, LUNA. HIS REACTION WAS VIOLENT.*

JANET VAN DYNE WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED.

PIETRO!

SINCE WHEN DID MASQUE SIDE WITH THE ANGELS?

BEATS ME. MAYBE THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY...

WAS THERE ANY SIGN OF LUNA? WAS THERE ANY SIGN OF OUR BABY AT ALL?

I'VE COVERED EVERY CORNER OF THE ESTATE, CRYS...

... I'M SORRY. I CAN'T FIND HER.

GREAT...MORE GOOD NEWS. OKAY, MASQUE, HOW DO YOU FIT INTO ALL THIS INTRIGUE?

THIS QUESTIONING IS A WASTE OF VALUABLE TIME--

WE'RE WAITING FOR AN ANSWER--

TZZZZZKKKK!

WHAT--?!

WIDOW! MOONRAKER! CENTURY!

FORGIVE THE INTRUSION. WE HAVE COME DIRECTLY FROM FORCE WORKS HQ, VENTURA.

WHAT'S THE STORY, PAL?

NATASHA?

A MOMENT, PIETRO...

...I WANT TO SET UP A COMMUNICATIONS LINK WITH FORCE WORKS *STAT.*

MEC

BRING THEM UP TO SPEED, CENTURY...

ANTHONY STARK HAS TRIGGERED A *TEMPORAL WEAPON* THAT IS SITED BENEATH THE WORKS HQ.*

IT IS SET TO DETONATE IN A LITTLE UNDER TWENTY ONE HOURS. THE EFFECTS, GLOBALLY, WILL BE *CATACLYSMIC.*

THE OTHER MEMBERS OF MY TEAM ARE WORKING TO *DISABLE* THE DEVICE. HOWEVER, WE HAVE BROUGHT *MOONRAKER* HERE FOR THIS DE-BRIEFING.

*SEE FORCE WORKS #19, WAR MACHINE #22. --NEL

IT APPEARS THAT THE MAN WE KNOW AS MOONRAKER, AS SLADE TRUMAN...

...IS IN FACT ONLY A CORPOREAL CONTAINER FOR THE SOUL OF *GUSTAV BRANDT,* KNOWN TO YOU AS--

--LIBRA!

HOW CAN THIS *BE?*

THE PRIESTS OF PAMA SALVAGED MY SOUL AND PLACED IT IN THIS BODY.

THE AVENGERS KNEW LIBRA AS BOTH FRIEND *AND* FOE, BUT YOU *MUST* TRUST ME NOW. I AM SENT AS A WARN--

SWORDSMAN! IT'S SO *STRANGE* TO SEE YOUR LIKENESS HERE...

...AND SO *APPROPRIATE.* YOUR COUNTERPART PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE EARLY LIFE OF MY DAUGHTER, *MANTIS.* AND NOW IT IS MANTIS WHO STANDS BY THE SIDE OF *KANG*...

MANTIS AND KANG... *TOGETHER?*

...SWORN TO TEAR THE AVENGERS *APART,* AND THE *WORLD* WITH THEM!

AVENGERS! I'VE GOT SCARLET WITCH ON THE LINK...

...SITUATION HERE IS AS YOU LEFT IT, NATASHA. THE PLACE IS IN *SHAMBLES.*

WITH *WAR MACHINE'S* HELP, WE'VE TRIED TO PENETRATE THE SUB-BASEMENTS WHERE THE *DEVICE* IS SITED...

...BUT TONY DESIGNED THE WORKS TO BE A *SMART* BUILDING. IT'S PROGRAMMED TO *DEFEND ITSELF*...

...WE'VE RUN UP AGAINST ANALOGS OF OUR BASE COMPUTER, *PLATO.* OUR OWN HEADQUARTERS IS TRYING TO *KILL US!*

HAVE YOU INFORMED THE OTHERS THAT STARK HAS *MURDERED* AGAIN?

I WAS ABOUT TO.

IT'S CLEAR THAT TONY KILLED OUR PUBLICITY MANAGER, AMANDA CHANEY.

I THINK SHE SAW TOO MUCH.

ANY CHANGE IN JAN'S CONDITION?

"NONE. HANK HAS HER ON LIFE-SUPPORT IN HIS LAB DOWNSTAIRS.

"ALL WE CAN DO NOW IS HOPE."

SHE'S IN OUR PRAYERS, NATASHA.

WE'LL KEEP TRYING TO BREAK INTO THE SUB-BASEMENT. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER WE'LL GET TO THAT DEVICE.

WE'LL SECURE THINGS HERE AND ASSESS TACTICAL OPTIONS. GOOD LUCK, FORCE WORKS. STAY IN TOUCH.

MASQUE HAS INFORMED US OF AN ARCTIC BUNKER. IRON MAN MAY HAVE FLED THERE.

VISION'S CALL IS A GOOD ONE. WE CAN'T LEAVE ANY STONE UNTURNED.

CENTURY COULD GATE A SMALL TEAM TO THE LOCATION INSTANTANEOUSLY...

"...AND TAKE A CLOSE LOOK."

PRECISE, ANALYTICAL, ACUTE...LIKE A MACHINE HE WORKS.

MARIANNE MARVELS A HUMAN BEING CAN BE SO PASSIONATE ABOUT COLD TECH-NOLOGY.

BUT THAT HAS BEEN ALL THE ADULT STARK HAS KNOWN. HOW MANY TECHNO-LOGICAL TRIUMPHS HAS HE ENGINEERED? HOW MANY HUMAN FAILURES?

FOR EVERY DEVELOPMENTAL BREAKTHROUGH, THERE'S A BROKEN, LOST RELATIONSHIP. IS THAT WHAT HAS DRIVEN ANTHONY TO THIS, SHE WONDERS?

TECHNOLOGY HASN'T LET HIM DOWN. IT HASN'T LEFT HIM FOR ANOTHER MAN. IT HASN'T TURNED AWAY IN ANGER. IT HASN'T ANSWERED BACK.

IT HAS BEEN CONSTANT AND RESOLUTE WHEN FLESH AND BLOOD HAVE BEEN ALL TOO MORTAL.

IT EVEN FIXED HIS BROKEN HEART.

SHE PITIES HIM...

...AND THROUGH HER PITY, SHE SEES HIM AT LAST.

SHE SEES PAST THE IRON MASK, THE UNYIELDING METAL CASKET AROUND HIS SOUL...

T-TONY?

...SHE SEES THE MAN, THE VICTIM.

A VICTIM OF HIMSELF, PERHAPS. A VICTIM OF AN INESCAPABLE FATE, UNDOUBTEDLY.

BUT A VICTIM, NONETHELESS.

MARIANNE?

I SAW YOU, TONY. I SAW YOU AS YOU TRULY ARE.

IS THAT WHAT YOU HOPED WOULD HAPPEN? IS THAT WHY YOU LET ME RETAIN MY TELEPATHY?

TALK TO ME, TONY.

I COULD NEVER... CONFESS.

THERE WAS NO ONE TO TURN TO...

...WHAT IT WOULD COST ME. BUT I HAD NO CHOICE.

HE BROKE ME. HE BROKE ME FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

...ALL THESE YEARS, KNOWING HOW IT WOULD GO... WHERE THE LONG, SLOW FALL INTO THE DARK WOULD TAKE ME...

WHO? DO YOU MEAN KANG? TONY...?

BREEEOOPBREEEOOPBREEEOOPB

OUT-SIDE...

T2ZZAK!

THIS IS THE PLACE.

I'LL KEEP THE BLIZZARDS OFF US, MOON-RAKER...

...LET'S JUST HOPE WE CAN FIND MY DAUGHTER!

WHOOOO! IT MUST BE *FORTY BELOW* OUT HERE!

VISION! AN ENERGY FIELD SURROUNDS THE BUNKER AND PREVENTS ME FROM GATING INSIDE.

THERE IS A LOCK-PLATE BY THE MAIN HATCH HERE...

...SET TO RECOG-NIZE ONLY THE IMPRINT OF ANTHONY STARK'S HAND.

PERHAPS, HOWEVER, I CAN TRIP THE MECHAN-ISM, AND--

SSKKZZAKKKKTT!

AAIGHHH!

I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ME *BETTER* THAN THAT, VISION. I'VE HAD YEARS TO PREPARE COUNTER-MEASURES AGAINST *YOUR* SKILLS.

AS FOR THE REST OF YOU... CENTURY, MOONRAKER, CRYSTAL...

...YOU'VE HUNTED ME HERE, EXPECTING THE *WORST*...

...I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU DOWN.

KLIK!

KRUNKK!

SHLUNK!

GRRRRCH!

PEOPLE...

...WE HAVE A PROBLEM!

VISION! VISION, GET UP!

SHRAAK!

FOOOM!

THOOOM!

MOONRAKER! EVADE!

THOOM!

DON'T WORRY 'BOUT ME, CENTURY-- VISION'S THE ONE WHO'S TOTALLY HELPLESS!

MAYBE I CAN LURE IT'S TRACKING LASERS AWAY FROM HIM--

--BY GENERATING ENOUGH HEAT AROUND MYSELF--!

IT WORKED! THEY ZEROED IN ON ME! VISION'S OUT OF DANGER-- FOR NOW!

THA-CHOOM!

C'MON, LET'S TAKE THIS TOY APART!

FINE! IF I LIVE THAT LONG!

SHRAK!

YOU WILL LIVE THAT LONG, CRYSTAL...

SHOOM!

...BUT VISION WILL BE CRUSHED IN ANOTHER SECOND, UNLESS...

SHKRAAAKTCHHH!

...I CAN USE PARALLAX TO TEAR/RIP/BUY US A LITTLE HEADROOM!

TONY! TONY!

TONY! LET ME IN, PLEASE!

PLEASE, TONY! DON'T DO THIS! THEY'RE AVENGERS! THEY'RE YOUR FRIENDS!

MARIANNE'S TELEPATHIC ENTREATIES REBOUND BACK AT HER.

HIS MIND HAS BECOME IRONCLAD AGAIN, CLOSED AND COLD, AS INACCESSIBLE AS THE DEFENSE COMMAND CENTER WHERE HE HAS LOCKED HIMSELF.

BUT SHE WAS SO CLOSE.

HE HAD BEEN ABOUT TO OPEN, TO LET HER INSIDE TO SHARE AND UNDERSTAND HIS FEARS, HIS HOPES AND HIS PAIN.

SHE WILL NOT LET THAT CHANCE GO...

TONY!

PSYCHICALLY, SHE PROBES AGAIN, DEEPER AND MORE FIRMLY THAN SHE HAS BEFORE...

TONY!

OHH!

AVENGERS! HEAR ME! THIS IS MARIANNE RODGERS! I'M INSIDE THE BUNKER WITH ANTHONY!

SACRED FETH! THAT VOICE...IN MY HEAD!

THAT'S TELEPATHY, PAL! WE CAN ALL HEAR IT!

YOUR ASSAULT IS FUTILE! THE JUGGERNAUT IS IMPREGNABLE! YOU MUST WITHDRAW TO SAFETY BEFORE IT CRUSHES YOU ALL...

...AND TONY WILL NOT HESITATE TO DO THAT!

BUT--

LISTEN TO ME! I HAVE SEEN INSIDE HIS MIND! HE IS WOUNDED, TORMENTED! AND WHATEVER HAS TURNED HIM AGAINST US ALL HAS HAD ITS CLAWS IN HIM FOR YEARS!

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER THAT HE WAS FREE OF ITS TAINT! THE EVIL IS NOT AN INNATE PART OF HIM!

GO! TELL THE AVENGERS!

CENTURY?

I'LL SUMMON A GATE! STAND BY...

TZZZ

PLEASE... HURRY!

THE TELEPORT GATE BLOOMS AND DIES LIKE A TIME-LAPSE FLOWER...

...AND THE BATTERED HEROES PLUNGE DOWN THE TRANS-DIMENSIONAL CONDUIT, GUIDED BY THE ALIEN WARRIOR AND THE NAVIGATIONAL INSTINCTS OF HIS STAFF, PARALLAX.

IT IS A PERFECT JUMP, CALCULATED TO A BILLIONTH PLACE OF VECTOR-MATH. THERE SHOULD BE NO COMPLICATIONS.

BUT, FOR A STARTLED SECOND IN TRANSIT, CENTURY GLIMPSES A GIRL WHO FLICKERS ACROSS THEIR PATH...

THEN THE GATE PROPELS THEM ON...

TZZZZAKKK!

...TO SOUTHAMPTON.

HERCULES! CLINT! VISION'S HURT...

OH, MAN...

... THIS LOOKS BAD! REAL BAD!

VISION! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

VISION?

H-HAWKEYE...

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? ANSWER ME!

WE FOUND THE BUNKER. STARK DEFENDED HIMSELF.

IT WAS ALL WE COULD DO TO ESCAPE WITH OUR LIVES...

WAIT A MINUTE! WHERE'S MOON-RAKER?

CENTURY TRANSPORTED HIM TOO, BUT...

...SOMEHOW, HE DIDN'T MAKE IT BACK!

ELSE-WHEN...

EEAARRGHH!

ENOUGH! ANY MORE WILL KILL HIM!

THAT RESULT IS *NOT* UN-APPEALING.

JUST LEAVE HIM TO ROT...

SEE THERE! THE *BLINDNESS* RETURNS TO HIS EYES! NOW THE SOUL OF *GUSTAV BRANDT* FULLY INHABITS THE BODY SHELL THAT DISGUISED HIM.

THE PRIESTS OF PAMA MUST HAVE THOUGHT THEMSELVES SO *CLEVER* TO BUILD THIS HUMAN *WARNING* AND SLIP IT SEAMLESSLY INTO THE WORLD BEHIND OUR BACKS...

...AND IT WAS ALL FOR NOTHING!

DO YOU HEAR ME, GUSTAV? DO YOU HEAR ME, TRAITOR-FATHER? YOU HAVE FAILED. EVEN NOW, OUR SERVANT STARK SETS IN MOTION THE FINAL PHASE OF OUR VICTORY.

IN LESS THAN A DAY, THE CHRONOGRAPHIC RESHAPING OF THE WORLD WILL BE COMPLETE. HUMAN CIVILIZATION WILL HAVE FALLEN, AND THE SCATTERED SURVIVORS WILL FLOCK TO KANG AND BEG HIM TO RULE OVER THEM.

FOR ME, THAT WILL BE A MEASURE OF REVENGE.

AND I WILL SAVOR IT.

W-WHY, MANTIS? YOU WANT TO UNLEASH TIME-STORMS AND BOIL THE WORLD AWAY IN WELTER OF BLOOD.

WHAT MALICE IS IT THAT BURNS IN YOUR HEART?

YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND...

WHOOM!

GOODBYE, FATHER.

CONTINUES IN AVENGERS #394, FORCE WORKS #20, WM #23, IRON MAN #325 & AVENGERS: TIMESLIDE!

IRON MAN

PRINTED CIRCUITS

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Please include your name and address, though we will withhold that information upon request

Let's start off "Printed Circuits" with a big CONGRATULATIONS! to a new father — Iron Man inker Mark McKenna. On August 28th, Mark and his lovely wife Kathy had their second child, Kyle James. Kyle came bouncing into reality at 10:45 p.m., weighing an impressive 9 lbs, 9 ozs.! So now that a few months have passed, maybe Kyle can lift up a brush and help his daddy out with his deadlines!

Dear Nel,

I have been reading IRON MAN since issue #3, and simply put "The Crossing" storyline is the greatest that I've ever read in this title! The return of Marianne Rogers and Madame Masque is awesome. Not since Tony considered killing Midas in #107 or the Armor Wars (#'s 225-232) has he ever resorted to such desperate acts — or has he?? Reading AVENGERS #391 and IRON MAN #321 back to back was quite a treat. The new retro-look armor and recent artwork are fantastic as well.

Since this is the first time I've written after all these years and as I consider myself an "Iron Traditionalist", I also am happy to see Beth, Happy, and Pepper back as well. I'm encouraged to see that you value Tony's past as much as his future. Since Marianne is back, any chance of resurrecting the Guardsman armor? Guardsman vs. War Machine?? How about the Freak? Make Mine Marvel!!

Gregory Varesco
167 Seaward Way
Avon Lake, OH 44012

It's always important to remember where a character has been before charting out where he or she may be going — and that's a fact that's being well utilized under the guidance of new IRON MAN scribe Terry Kavanagh. With classic characters like Marianne, Masque, and Happy Hogan returning, it'll be interesting to see what type of impact they'll have on Tony once he's brought ba — oops! Almost let the cat out of the bag there.

Dear Nel and Mike,

Why does it take two pencilers to do one issue of IRON MAN? That's the second time this has happened. Can neither of these guys meet a deadline? And what's going on with Tony Stark? We saw him kill Marilla, but he doesn't seem to remember doing it. Was it our Tony Stark who killed her or was it a Tony Stark from another dimension who came through that door in the Avengers Mansion basement? God, I'm getting sick of this clone crap.

Delmo Walters
1831 White Plains Rd. #1B
Bronx, NY 10462

No clone. No LMD. We're not going that route, folks. The guy who killed Marilla and Yellowjacket and Amanda Cheney was none other than our hero, Tony Stark. Confused? Don't worry, the whole story will climax

"What's going on with Tony Stark? We saw him *kill* Marilla..."

next month in our double-sized 325th issue featuring our two armored he — wait a sec. Did we say two?

And as for your question regarding our choosing two pencilers to complete an issue, let us go on record to say that all of the pencilers we may use (Heitor Oliveira, Jimmy Cheung, Adriana Melo, etc.) have no problem in finishing an issue a month. But when we were first creating "The Crossing" storyline, we got soooo behind that it required us to take drastic measures to insure that each issue made its proper shipping date. Hence, the multiple artists on several issues.

Dear Nel and Mike,

Can we see Iron Man use his roller skates again? Thanks.

Shawn Evans
1021 Des Plaines #406
Forest Park, IL 60130-2139

Uhh...we'll have to ask Terry about that one.

Dear Nel,

IRON MAN #321 definitely was a shocker issue. Mere months after coming on board as the book's new writer, Terry Kavanagh has given the title's main character Tony Stark yet another fascinating impulse, making him the focal point of the current "The Crossing" storyline. All things considered, IRON MAN #321 left me a satisfied man.

At least, for all of thirty days, that is.

Olav Beemer
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The Netherlands

Thanks for supporting us, Olav.

For all of you FORCE WORKS fans out there, be sure not to miss CENTURY: DISTANT SONS, a special solo/origin one-shot featuring everybody's favorite teleporting alien, on sale December 19. Written by Dan Abnett & Andy Lanning, with art by Jim Calafiore and P.L. Palmiotti, this one's sure to be worth it!

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NEXT ISSUE

Next issue we see the Avengers & Force Works storm Tony's secret Arctic Bunker. All of this plus Masque! Join Terry Kavanagh and guest artists Jim Calafiore and Peter Palmiotti in just thirty sizzling days!